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CORREGGIO:

A Tragedy by

ADAM OEHLENSCHLAGER.

Translated by Theodore Martin.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ANTONIO ALLORI, a Painter.
 MARIA, his Wife.
 GIOVANNI, his Son.
 MICHAEL ANGELLO, JULIO ROMANO,
 OTTAVIO, a Nobleman of Parma.
 RICORDANO, a Nobleman of Florence.
 CLESTINA, his Daughter.
 SILVESTRO, a Monk.
 BATTISTA, a Vintner.
 FRANCESCO, his Son.
 VALENTINO, NICOLÒ, and several Robbers.
 LAURETTA, a Peasant Girl.
 Messenger.
 Servant.

ACT FIRST.

A square in the village of Correggio; in the background a wood; to the right a large hotel; to the left ANTONIO's cottage, with a garden, in which he sits painting. His wife is sitting to him; her son Giovanni stands beside her, with an Agnus-Dei staff in his hand.

ANTONIO.
 STAND still, boy—hush! A moment, and I've done!

Then you may go to play again.

GIOVANNI.

Dear father,
 And won't Giovanni, in the picture there,
 Be soon done, too?

ANTONIO.

He will.

GIOVANNI.

And mother.

ANTONIO.

Ay!

GIOVANNI (to his mother).

Dear mother, you are Mary, that I see;
 I am Giovanni; and my father paints us
 There in the picture just as we are here;
 But tell me where the little Jesus is,
 That in the picture lies upon your breast?

MARIA.

In heaven.

GIOVANNI.

And how can father see him there?

MARIA.

He thinks of Jesus as the loveliest child
 He can conceive.

GIOVANNI (musing).

Is that because he was
 The loveliest of all children?

MARIA.

Yes.

ANTONIO.

Stand still!

GIOVANNI.

Father, shall I become a painter too?

ANTONIO.

Time will show that; if thou'rt industrious,
 Perhaps!

GIOVANNI.

Oh father, I will be industrious!

(Enter SILVESTRO from the wood. As he sees ANTONIO painting, he makes a sign to MARIA, and places himself, unobserved, behind ANTONIO's chair, contemplating the picture.)

SILVESTRO (to himself).

How beautiful!

GIOVANNI (to SILVESTRO).

My father says, I too
 Shall be a painter.

ANTONIO

(turns round and rises when he sees the hermit).

You here, reverend father!

SILVESTRO.

Do not let me disturb you; pray go on!
 The colours will get dry.

ANTONIO.

I've done enough, good father; and my boy
 Will scarce submit to stand much longer still,
 His young blood must be moving.

SILVESTRO.

How very beautiful this picture is!

ANTONIO.

I have another here, for you to hang
 Within your cell!

SILVESTRO.

And you have thought of me?

ANTONIO.

The little thing is finish'd. You should be
 Most truly welcome to the larger work,
 But I, alas! must sell it presently;
 We needs must live.

SILVESTRO.

My good Antonio,

I thank you from my heart! This lovely work
 Would be too much for me; on me it would
 Be thrown away. Nature is my great picture;
 In yonder woodland shades divinity
 Reveals itself to me. Pictures, my friend,
 Are for the palace, the chateau, the church!
 The man, whom levity and trivial cares
 Wear step by step from nature and from God,
 Is by the artist's hand led back to both.

ANTONIO.

Think you, our art is capable of that?

SILVESTRO.

Art is indeed the beauteous rainbow arch,
 Which spans the void of space 'twixt earth and
 heaven.

ANTONIO.

That is religion's office, is it not?

SILVESTRO.

Not so; religion, like a cherub stands,
 And bears the lovely toy upon her wings.

ANTONIO.

A toy! In very truth, you name it well!

I will go fetch your picture. [Exit.

SILVESTRO.

Good Maria,

Tell me, how fares it with Antonio's health?

MARIA.

Ah me! you see how pale he is.

SILVESTRO.

Nay, nay,

There's nothing, child, in that. Don't fret thyself.

He's very sensitive,—all artists are,—
 Fire burns and wastes, you know, as well as
 warmth.

Yet does his passion ne'er lay hold on him
 With vulture talons, like a ravening beast;
 It floats, a passing meteor, in the air,
 And straight is quenched again. All that he
 needs

Is rest and cheerfulness, and these he has.

MARIA.

He is too good and gentle for this world;
 Like his own art, a vision beautiful,
 Which every passing cloud can overcast.
 Oh, reverend father! there's a something here
 Which says to me, I shall not keep him long.

SILVESTRO.

Maria, child!—what idle whims are these?
 You weep?

MARIA.

Oh yes! I shall not keep him long.
 His spirit pants to soar above the earth;
 Life is no more to him than a grey mist,
 Shot with the dyes of the eternal light.

SILVESTRO.

Does he not love thee, say?

MARIA.

Oh, yes! he loves me

SILVESTRO.

And loves he not his child?

MARIA.

No father more.

SILVESTRO.

And loves he not all things are worthy love?

MARIA.

Heaven knows, he does, he does!

SILVESTRO.

Then dry your tears,

Trust God, and hope the best! His heart is
 full

Of this earth's sympathies and strivings yet.
 All artists love the earth, because they love,
 As children do, whate'er delights the sense.
 True, like bold eagles, they at times are fain
 To mount o'er rock and cloudland up to heaven,
 Yet do they love to drop again to earth,
 Which gives its nurture to their fiery blood.
 Life must love life perforce; 'tis nature's law.
 Believe me, hoary eld alone can gaze
 On Death's drear blank abysses undismay'd.

MARIA.

He comes.

SILVESTRO.

My child, he must not see thee sad.

ANTONIO (entering with a picture).

Your picture, reverend father, here it is!

SILVESTRO.

Ah, so! a sweet repentant Magdalen!*

ANTONIO.

Refuge she sought, like you, in woodland shades;
 But not, like you, from love of solitude
 And being all awestruck of the world;
 A sinful girl, who, stung by sharp remorse,
 Fled to the thicket like a startled roe,
 To leave life's dread seductions far behind.
 Yet is it fine, methinks, when woman thus,
 Though fallen once, uplifts herself again;
 There are not many men who compass that.
 Therefore 'tis meet that as a saint she stand
 Before our eyes. And seeing that she was
 A lovely woman, I have, so to speak,
 Portrayed her in the picture as the goddess
 Of woodland hermits,—as your own goddess.
 Well, there she is!

SILVESTRO (smiling).

You artists, worst and best,
 Can never quite abjure the pagan's creed.
 As goddess! My own goddess!

ANTONIO.

Goddess, saint,
 Are but two titles for one thing, I trow,—
 Incarnate good, that works for our avail!

SILVESTRO.

So look'd at, possibly. A lovely picture!
 The dusky forest gloom, the flaxen hair,
 The pure white skin, the robe of azure blue,
 The skull in contrast with youth's fullest bloom,
 The woman's gentle grace, the mighty book,—

* The picture here suggested by the poet is manifestly
 the famous Magdalen of the Dresden Gallery.

Herein you have, with matchless skill, resolved Things opposite into divinest harmony.

ANTONIO.

I am indeed most glad it pleases you.

SILVESTRO.

I'll hang it up within my little cell;¹
There it will shed the dawn and sunset glow
Upon my morning and my evening prayers.
May Heaven compensate you, for I cannot;
I am a poor recluse. But pray accept
These roots, Antonio, for the love I bear you!
They're nourishing and wholesome, and their
juice
Soothes, like some spicy draught, the weary
frame!
Take them and drink them morning, friend,
and eve,
At sunrise and at sunset; then shall I
Be on my knees before this lovely picture.
Their juice, my prayers, and your own nature,
soon,
I trust, will bring you back to perfect health.

ANTONIO.

My illness has been gone this many a day.
Yet do I thank you heartily. I like
A spicy morning draught.

SILVESTRO.

Now fare ye well!

ANTONIO (*as SILVESTRO is about to retire*).

Tarry a moment, friend, and let me look!
Has not the little picture caught a speck?

(*contemplates the picture with affection.*)

No! 'Tis untouched.—So! Good! And now
farewell!

(*Gives it back to him.*)

SILVESTRO.

Farewell! Yet once again accept my thanks!
[*Exit.*]

(*During the preceding dialogue, the boy GIOVANNI has fetched a piece of charcoal, and sketched some figures of men upon the wall of the hotel.*)

ANTONIO.

It always gives me pain to part, as now,
From any of my pictures. We become
So bound up with the thing our hands have
formed;

It is a child, a portion of our soul!
How happy is the poet! He can have
His children all beside him at all times;
The painter, he is a poor father, who
Must send them forth into the great broad world,
Where they must thenceforth manage for themselves.

What is the boy about? How! painting fresco
Upon our neighbor's wall! Give over, child;
Landlord Battista will not suffer this.
You know he has forbidden it many a time.
Thou foolish urchin, do not draw the leg
So scraggy! (*helps him.*) So! That's some-
thing like the thing.

Ha! ha! the rogue is not so very bad!
But he must have a cap, to be complete.

GIOVANNI.

Oh, and a sabre, father, and a sabre!

ANTONIO.

And so he must.

GIOVANNI.

Let me make that myself!

ANTONIO.

Long, mind, and crooked!

BATTISTA

(*enters from the hotel, and sees him.*)

There the old fool stands,
Just like a little child, and helps the brat

To spoil my wall, in place of cuffing him.

Antonio, are you deaf?

ANTONIO (*with embarrassment*).

Ah, neighbour mine!

BATTISTA.

The devil! you too destroying all my wall?

ANTONIO.

Pray, take it not amiss, friend. Many a time
I have forbid the boy.

BATTISTA.

Forbid, and yet

You lend a helping hand?

ANTONIO.

You see he made
This veteran's leg preposterously lean.
Nay, never frown! What mischief can I do,
To have the small soldado standing there
Upon the wall, a trusty sentinel?
He'll serve to scare off robbers from your house.

BATTISTA.

That's more than you could do, with all your
skill.

You let my wall alone, I say! If you
Won't punish your young whelp, I'll do it my-
self.

ANTONIO.

Come, come, friend, take it not so much amiss!
How can you be so angry with the boy?
The germ of what's to follow will peep out
Betimes. 'Tis instinct stirs within the child.
His fingers itch, and he perforce must paint.
Even so the duckling does not shun the brook.
Even so the young bird proves his pinion's
strength.

Water and air lure them; and colours him.

BATTISTA.

Bah! Humbug! Saw you e'er my Francesco
Disfiguring the walls? There was a child,
Quiet, and well brought up! And now in Rome
He's growing a great painter.

ANTONIO.

Ah, indeed?

BATTISTA.

I tell you, a great painter, so he is!
A real artist, one who paints by rule,
By science, sir! When once his schooling's
done,
Under his present master, I will send him
To Raphael, who shall turn him out complete.

ANTONIO.

But Raphael has been dead these eighteen years.

BATTISTA.

There's others living, then, as good as he!
I've money, and on him I stint it not;
And since the fashion has grown up of late
For every man to paint, why, zounds! my son
Shall paint it with the best. I've lots of cash!
On him I spare it not;—brushes I buy,
Chalks, colours, canvas, palettes, all he needs.
For to my thinking nothing is more sad,
Than art, kept down and marr'd by poverty.

ANTONIO.

And chiefly, when 'tis poverty of soul.

BATTISTA.

What's that you say? What do you mean by
that?

ANTONIO.

Think you, it is the brush that makes the pain-
ter?

Trust me, it never did, and never can.

BATTISTA.

But my Francesco, look you, will be one!
None of your common village daubers he,
Who paint mere daylight,—no, but—

ANTONIO.

Night effects?

I can paint these too.

BATTISTA.

Oh! Your trumpery picture!

There is not even common sense in that.
You make the infant, like a glow-worm, shine.*

ANTONIO.

Prithce, blaspheme not! Common sense! Go to!
If you would comprehend what is divine,
Your soul must be by sense divine inspired.

BATTISTA.

'Odalife, you deem yourself divine, methinks?

ANTONIO.

Sir, I am poor, self-tutor'd, and I claim
No place beside the great immortal men,
Who with their glorious works have bless'd the
world.

Nay more, their works have never met mine
eyes.

Still, still, that Nature form'd me too, like them,
An artist,—that I inherit not thy scorn,
I do believe,—nor do I stand alone
In so believing.

BATTISTA.

Because silly fools

Have purchased now and then your showy
daubs,
For sums a deal too large, you think so, eh?

ANTONIO.

Listen, Battista—you are mine host! Bravo!
You are a famous cook!—Bravissimo!
A famous cook is worthy of all honour.

You have found meals for me and my poor wife,
And I am some few scudi in your debt.

Have patience, I will sell my picture soon.
You must not let it disconcert you, friend.
Should your son prove no painter after all,
He can be something else. 'Twould never do,
Were all men to be painters for themselves.
There must be some to give the painters work.
Then do not fret—have patience, and supply me
With what I want to-day, and one day more,
And I the next will pay you all I owe.

BATTISTA.

You shall have nought from me, till I am paid.

ANTONIO.

So be it—I cannot beg, I'll rather starve.

A MESSENGER (*enters and goes up to Battista.*)

A letter, sir, from Rome.

[*Exit.*]

(*To be continued.*)

THE "Annuaire" of the Belgian Academy contains an interesting biography of Arago, with some new anecdotes. During the Revolution the great astronomer, we are told, got entangled in a crowd, and was in imminent danger of being thrown into the Seine. Twenty hands were already upon his collar, and the National Guard were looking on trembling with horror. A non-commissioned officer, who with all the rashness of Peter had cut down one of the assailants, only heightened the confusion. Dusty, torn, and helpless, Arago cried out, "Hé bien! hé bien! que faites vous donc? mais je ne sais pas nager." This naive inquiry raised a laugh, and the astronomer escaped. An amusing story is told of his frightening a fat Belgian out of a place he coveted in the Ghent Railway, by a detailed account of a frightful explosion and loss of life. He described the shattered limbs and broken bones till the obnoxious *vis-à-vis* fairly took flight, and left the field of battle free for his laughing conqueror.—*Athenaeum.*

* The allusion here is to the famous "La Notte," in the Dresden Gallery, when the light, in accordance with the old legend, proceeds from the new-born babe, an effect which Correggio seems to have been the first to attempt, and in which he has never been surpassed.